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S E R M O N

PREACHED AT
ST. THOMAS'S,

JANUARY 1, 1782.

FOR THE
BENEFIT of the CHARITY-SCHOOL;

I N
GRAVEL-LANE, SOUTHWARK.

B Y
JOSEPH FAWCETT.

Printed at the Request of the MANAGERS.

L O N D O N:
PRINTED FOR H. GOLDNEY, PATER-NOSTER-ROW.

M,DCC,LXXXII.

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T I T U S II, 14.

WHO GAVE HIMSELF FOR US, THAT HE MIGHT
REDEEM US FROM ALL INIQUITY.

NO point can be more clear, than that the character of Almighty God is accomplished in purity and goodness; nor can any truth be more familiar to reason, than that all the honour and happiness of every intellectual being consist in a conformity to this immortal standard of perfection. As he is a God of truth, and without iniquity, to depart from all iniquity is the only path to dignity and peace.

To increase the number of virtuous and happy beings, the inspiration of the Almighty animated the dust of the ground; and man became a living soul. Stamped with the sublime image of his maker, his immortal spirit was god-like erect

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as his frame. Fair was the face of Nature round him, but her face within him was quite as fair; for there the sweet blossoms of innocence grew, and all the bosom was paradise.

From this state of mortal eminence and bliss, the imperfect probationer has fallen. The whole constitution of humanity is become broken and disfigured. The human face divine has lost the tranquillity of innocence, and the mild beauty of social love: each uncomely passion is pictured upon it, and the fair sunshine of the breast is exchanged for the clouds of care and the glooms of remorse.

To restore mankind to that purity and peace which they have lost, divine wisdom and benevolence have been at work from the beginning until now. All the institutions of religion, and all the dispensations of providence, have been pointed to this beautiful object. The whole compass of human history is but one grand lecture on morals, which the Deity through every age has been reading to man. To promote the reformation of human nature, the venerable law of God was proclaimed in thunder to the trembling tribes of Israel; and in order to discipline them in virtue, and at the same time to hold them up as an example to posterity, that people invariably found that their secular history took its colour from the complexion of their moral story.

Last of all, to crown the exertions of Heaven in the cause of human virtue, to make it next to impossible for man to err, and to leave him without the shadow of an excuse if he should,—the auspicious babe of Bethlehem is born:—the
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mild and gentle Messiah commences his immortal reign.

“ The grace of God that bringeth salvation,
 “ hath appeared to all men; teaching us that de-
 “ nying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should
 “ live soberly, righteously, and godly in this
 “ present world; looking for that blessed hope and
 “ the glorious appearing of the great God and
 “ saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us
 “ that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and
 “ purify unto himself peculiar people zealous of
 “ good works.”

It is not possible to imagine a dispensation, more admirably calculated to reform the morals of mankind, and train them for immortal glory. The method which it takes to accomplish this point, is not by exercising any mystical *compulsion* upon the human mind, as some enthusiasts have imagined; but by speaking to that cool understanding which the inspiration of the Almighty hath given us, and by presenting all those *motives* to the practice of virtue, which work most powerfully upon the ingenuousness and sensibility of human nature. The obligations to duty which arise out of the nature of things and our relation to the moral Governor of the universe, are not sufficient to influence the majority of mankind. To these considerations, therefore, Christianity has added every inducement to the performance of duty, that is fitted to the feelings of the human heart.

The influence of Christianity upon the UNDERSTANDING, and upon the PASSIONS, are the two points to which I now beg the favour of your attention.

The *first* step which the christian religion takes to accomplish the reformation of the world, is to remove the veil which had long concealed the face of Duty. Mankind had long been insensible to the beautiful simplicity of virtue. Ceremony and austerity were the principle features in all their moral systems; than which nothing can have a greater tendency to disgust the manly and generous mind, and give to virtue an amiable and unpopular aspect. The plan of conduct which Christianity has delineated, is as free as possible from every thing of this kind. It does not load the shoulders with sacraments, nor cloud the countenance with melancholy. It does not teach us to worship the God of truth with the parade of ceremony, and the foppery of devotion. In the beautiful and generous table of its laws, there is not one which commands us to fly from the innocent pleasures of life to the solitude of hermitages, or the gloom of convents. The pupils of Jesus are not sent out upon painful journies to the holy land, and made to believe that the only way to please the God of love is to fatigue the frame, and wound the feet with thorns. Christianity has put an everlasting stop to all the pomp and all the penance of religion: it is equally removed from the meanness of superstition, and the madness of enthusiasm; and reduces the whole duty of man to that justice and mercy, which are the links of society, and the features of Deity. It requires no sacrifice but a broken heart. It pronounces him only a holy pilgrim, who goes about doing good continually. It exacts no mortification, but an abstinence from those pleasures which pollute the mind, and poison its joys for ever;

ever; and for the trappings which once religion wore, it asks no ornaments but meekness, gentleness and truth.—That system of morals which Christ holds up to mankind, approves itself at once to every honest mind, and every feeling heart. It requires nothing of us, the propriety of which we do not see, and the beauty of which we do not feel. It does not exact a blind obedience to unintelligible and arbitrary injunctions; it does not treat us as mechanical slaves, or uninformed children, but as beings possessed of manly intelligence and generous sensibility.

To love each other as brethren, to feed the hungry and take the stranger in, to sit by the mourner's side and try to sooth the sorrow which we cannot remove, to guide the child of simplicity through the mazes of human life, when frailty strays from duty with gentleness and delicacy to lead the wanderer back, to speak with tenderness of the reputation which indiscretion has wounded, and to hide from other eyes the fault our own has seen, to forgive the man who has done us wrong, and for malignant curses to return the generous and honest blessing of triumphant goodness,—all this is simplicity, all this is beauty; it appeals to the pride of a man; it consults the dignity of human nature, and the honor of God at once.

In whatever point of view we contemplate Christianity, we must plainly perceive it to be a system of happiness, and a system of honor.

I must be free to say, that the man who will not be induced to do his duty when so beautiful a representation of it is given him, a representation so honorable to his nature and so friendly to
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all his better feelings, is beyond the reach of every generous motive.

Having thus attempted to illustrate the *conviction* with which Christianity inspires its pupils, you will give me leave to mention a few instances in which it speaks to their *PASSIONS*.

That *encouragement* which the gospel gives us, to hope for divine acceptance amid the innumerable imperfections of humanity, is one very powerful inducement to the practice of duty; which is pointed, with equal force, to the timidity and generosity of the human heart.

When we take a view of divine purity with all our imperfections on our heads, it is enough to fill us with terror, confusion and despair, and to throw a fatal damp over all our endeavours to please a Being of such inimitable rectitude. An apprehension that it is impossible for us to accomplish any point, very powerfully discourages all our attempts; and for such weak and imperfect beings as we are, in this corrupted state of society, in all points to do the will of our Father in heaven, is next to impossible at least.

On this account, we stand in need of every possible encouragement to banish our fears, to cheer our spirits, and animate us to the performance of our duty. When a gladiator is weak and timid, he requires peculiar plaudits from the generous spectators that surround him; and when we consider what a host of temptations we have to encounter, and how prone our sickly virtue is to yield, we shall be convinced that we cannot be too well assured of the indulgence and generosity with

with which the grand Spectator looks down upon this theatre of action.

In this respect the christian religion is well suited to our case. We are here informed that the God of all is not strict to mark iniquity, that he will not quarrel with the imperfections of humanity, that he will forgive the criminal who enters his presence with the tear of honest penitence in his eye, and that he will crown every humble and ingenuous heart, notwithstanding its weaknesses, with his immortal favor and loving kindness.

These are chearful considerations, these are pleasant prospects. Animated by these hopes, the poor broken hearted penitent, that would otherwise lie down in despondency, may rise up from the dust of despair and proceed on his way rejoicing.

Particularly to the *generous part of mankind* are these encouragements adapted. When a man of this complexion in the hot moment of passion and indiscretion, has committed an action which his cooler judgments condemns, and his honest feelings detest, such a man is exquisitely alive to all the stings of self reproach, and knows not how either to forgive himself or ask forgiveness of heaven. Penitents of this character would be ashamed to implore the pardon of their crimes. Their blushes, their beautiful blushes would not suffer them to approach the altars of Almighty God, without the most confident assurances of divine clemency.

There are some men I know, and I blush to say that I belong to their kind, on whom these considerations operate as motives to licentiousness:

Thus,

Thus, from the plant which to you and me were salutary food, the serpent extracts malignant poison. Were I this moment surrounded by a million of such men, I would not address a syllable to them. They are beyond the reach of remonstrance, and I have only to say,———God be merciful to them.

The consideration of that mildness which marks the character of Deity, instead of leading to a tame, faint, and stunted morality, is of all motives the most powerful with a generous mind to strain every nerve and be zealous of good works. It touches the honor and ingenuousness of a man; it provokes him to an equal return of generosity, and leads him to exert every effort in promoting the glory of a being who places his duty upon so honorable a footing.

In the mercy of God as declared unto mankind by Jesus Christ our Lord, there is, if I may so say, a point which even stings the feeling heart; and gives it so exquisite a sense of divine goodness, that it cannot bear to be spiritless in its moral exertions, or rest contented with any thing short of zealous, animated, and sublime obedience.

The *example of Christ* is another motive to duty, which the gospel presents; and which operates with peculiar energy upon the passions of human nature.

Were a teacher to enter the world and hold up to mankind the most beautiful system of morals imaginable, yet were to lead a flagitious life himself, he would not be likely to make many converts.

He is the best preacher, whose conduct is his tongue. He most clearly defines integrity, most eloquently

eloquently describes it, and most pathetically pleads its cause, who exemplifies it in his life.

Till a precept is *reduced to practice*, we are not certain that it can be done. We may contemplate a table of laws with delight, we may admire the beauty of its parts and the consenting harmony of the whole; but till we see it realized in action, we shall be apt to view it as a beautiful shadow, too fine and airy for the touch of man. This had been particularly the case with many precepts which Christianity contains. A religion that inculcated a noble contempt of temporary pleasure, and a heroic superiority to toil and danger in the defence of immortal truth, had probably been looked upon by the world as the pomp of declamation or the rant of enthusiasm; had it not seen a man wandering about without a pillow to support his aching head, or a roof to protect it from inclemency; and, to serve the cause of virtue, exposing himself to insult, barbarity and death. A religion that commanded us to love our enemies, and bless them that curse us, had been treated by mankind as the fine spun notion of a romantic brain; had they not beheld a man, possessed of all those amiable and endearing qualities which might have been expected to melt even savages into love, and win the caresses of all mankind; treated with every indignity and cruelty that inhumanity could inflict;—yet even in the tragic hour, when he was bleeding and writhing amid the agonies which his enemies had occasioned,——lifting up a meek and gentle eye to Heaven, and breathing a generous prayer for the pardon of his murderers. In these points the christian teacher has

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beautifully recommended his religion. He has commanded his disciples to do nothing which he has not done before. With equal justice may the compliment be paid to his conduct, that was paid to his eloquence;—Never man ACTED like this man.

But example, at the same time that it proves a precept practicable, *illustrates the beauty of it*. It gives a body and a colour to truth; it strikes the senses, it speaks to the heart; the transported spectator——

——“ feels how awful goodness is, and sees
“ Virtue in her own shape how lovely.”

Were all the philosophers and orators that ever lived, assembled in council to unite their abilities in a description of virtue, they could not exhibit so beautiful a picture of it, as the conduct of Christ holds up. Is not the modest question, “ Why callest thou me good,” a finer image of humility than any definition could give?---- Does not the kind invitation to little children, convey a more beautiful idea of simplicity and gentleness, than any pen could communicate?— Is not the humble address to Almighty God, “ Not my will but thine be done,” presented at a moment of inexpressible agony, a more vivid and amiable picture of resignation, than any flowers of speech could paint?—Was ever candour so sweetly expressed, as in that gentle dismissal to a daughter of frailty,—“ Go and sin no more”?—And is not a whole life employed in pilgrimage and toil, for the sake of serving mankind, the most animated lecture imaginable
upon

upon that social love, which is the soul of virtue and the crown of Christianity?—In a word, there is not a single feature in the face of virtue, but is more clearly delineated and more beautifully coloured in the character of Christ, than if all the powers of the pencil and the pen had been exhausted upon the subject.

But there is another good effect of example, which I must not forget, and that is *Emulation*. There is a pride, an honorable pride in man, which scorns to be outshone. When a noble height is gained by another we burn to mount as high; we are uneasy and impatient till we reach it; we are stung with shame at the thought of being below it. This is a noble, manly and generous principle. It is the parent of every sublime attainment: it is the basis of immortal improvement: it is the wing of fire that will carry us through eternity. In this respect, Christianity has an uncommon influence upon the mind of man. It presents us with a character accomplished in every quality that can do honor to humanity. With admiration we must contemplate it; and if the spark of Divinity within us be not quite extinguished, it will be all our ambition to rival it.

Gratitude to the saviour of the world is another affection, to which Christianity appeals, as a motive to duty. This is a very powerful and pathetic inducement. There never existed a man since man was born upon earth, to whom mankind are under such obligations as to him—who came to redeem them from iniquity. Many a man has saved a country from political ruin, and his grave has been honored with that honest country's tear; many a man has communicated moral

benefit to a bounded circle by the force of instruction and example: But there never was a man whose services took so extensive a round, whose usefulness filled so ample a sphere, who toiled so hard and bled so fast in the cause of mankind, as he whose gospel we profess. Every man that lives, every man that shall exist as long as the earth endures, is bound to pronounce the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth with tenderness and respect.

Here then Christianity takes a strong hold of the affections. Imagine yourself standing by the death-bed of one whom you long had loved:—With all the fervours of a dying man he grasps your hand,—with all the tenderness of a dying friend he requests a favor of you to be granted after his decease,—a request so interesting to him, that as he breathes it, his very soul swims in his eyes;——Take care of that orphan when I am gone,—or—Comfort her who in an hour will be a widow. After being thus requested, could you refuse your compliance?—If after the departure of your friend you were to neglect his warm petition,—would not his injured memory haunt you? Would not his silent dust upbraid you?—Could you pass through the church yard where he lay interred, without starting at sight of his tomb?—

Let us apply the case:—I think the cases are parallel.—When the generous friend of mankind took his final leave of the world, he assembled his disciples round him:—You and I were assembled then,—all mankind were there:—You remember with what solemnity he addressed us.—“ If ye love me, keep my commandments.”—

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These were his parting words :—Forget them, he that can.

He is now departed, but his family is here. Every orphan and every widow is a surviving relative of his : Every sick man and every stranger is a brother. In as much as ye do it unto the least of these, ye do it unto him. It is the man of Nazareth that knocks at your door :—if there be a spark of honor within you, open and let him in. —It is the man of Nazareth that pines in yonder dungeon :—if gratitude has yet a place on earth, go visit the melancholy captive.

Thus is a christian bound to his duty, by a tie which nothing short of infernal malignity can break. If this generous tie he can snap ; if this beautiful cord of love, this more than cable to ingenuous natures, he is able to burst ; he is omnipotently bad, he is bent upon his ruin ; let no man try to stop him ; let the madman, let the monster rush to his fate.

The last appeal of Christianity to the heart which I shall mention, is that *immortality* which it has brought to light.

However strong the conviction of the mind might be of the intrinsic beauty of virtue, and the solidity of that peace which it inspires ; yet the cheerless idea that it had but a few years of existence to pass, would cast a deadly damp over every generous and grand exertion. If a man conceives that at the expiration of threescore years and ten, he is to be discharged from the service of his Sovereign for ever, he will be likely to feel no very animated ambition to signalize himself in it. To cultivate the beautiful ornaments of the heart, only to adorn the transitory
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term of human life, were but to deck with flowery wreaths the victim that is leading to the altar. The mind sickens at the idea: It takes away all the heart and soul of duty, and cramps all the manly and heroic darings of human nature. The mind of man wants room to move in: It demands an unbounded theatre of action, where it may expand its wings, where it may exert its powers, and expatiate without confinement.—When a man is possessed of the sublime idea that he was born to live for ever, that the godlike spark within him shall outburn the fires of the firmament, that he shall continue to rise while immortality endures from one degree of mortal excellence and celestial preferment to another,——this consideration fills him with an idea of his own dignity, fires him with an honorable thirst of glory, and calls every latent principle of his nature into vigorous exercise.

To these bold heavings of the human heart, Christianity is finely suited.—A future state was never set in so conspicuous and sublime a point of view, as that in which the gospel has placed it. The vast unbounded prospect lies before us, and not the shadow of a doubt remains upon it. With us it is not thought a thing impossible that God should raise the dead. We have seen the experiment made: we have seen the experiment succeed. Him that was dead, at the call of Divinity we have seen come forth, and restored to his weeping sisters. And though the rulers took counsel and the guards were set, we have seen the illustrious hero of the cross ascend in triumph from the tomb, and become the first fruits of them that slept. In this persuasion we all rejoice, that as the stone was rolled away from
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our master's grave, in like manner it shall be finally rolled away from ours.

This then is the glorious casting weight, which must determine the choice of every man of spirit on the side of integrity. To be conscious of that immortal existence, and not live up to the dignity of such a name, is meanness which nothing can raise; is insensibility, which nothing can animate.

If there is a man whom this idea cannot fire, *that* man is beyond the reach of salvation. He has no heart about him. He is an inanimate lump of clay: From dust he came, and to dust he shall return.

Such then is the irresistible energy with which Christianity operates upon the moral *feelings* of human nature. Thus, though every pupil of Jesus is left at his liberty to act as he will, yet more than chains are cast upon the captivated affections; and though no miracle is exerted, yet every motive presented to the bosom, has all the force of a miracle upon the feeling heart.

AN INFERENCE or two shall conclude.

In the advantages which as christians we enjoy, let us *rejoice with trembling*.

If our feet should chance to slip, we have a fearful way to fall. Fixed upon an eminence that is exalted even to heaven, we look down a precipice enough to make us giddy with fear. If the untutored Indian strays from duty, his heart shall condemn him in milder terms; but if a professor of our most holy religion violates the sacred laws of God, conscience shall sharpen its sting, and awaken torture's most exquisite throb. The fall

fall of a christian is a deep and terrible tragedy, at which nature might start, and angels tremble.

How any man will be able to lift up his head at the tribunal of immortal Truth, to whom the gospel has been preached in vain, is not to be conceived. The emotions of such a man, at such an hour, exhibit a picture over which Heaven weeps, and the heart of humanity breaks.

An unreformed *christian*, is a monster in nature. The story of such a man sounds like a fable in the universe; and distant beings unacquainted with human history, might smile at the romance of such a character.

Renounce your crimes then, or throw your charter away. Depart from all iniquity, or dare not to pronounce the name of Christ. Be zealous of good works, or fly the land.—Lives there a man in a country like ours, who is determined to persist in immoral paths? If such a man there be, and he wishes to preserve his peace in the hour of reflection, or retain his reason in the hour of death,—let him fly to some barbarous region where the amiable Messiah is a stranger still; where the moral table bears no characters of duty, but those which Nature's hand has inscribed upon it; and where all the proud soliloquies of the sage upon immortality, are only founded upon the testimony of the Divinity that stirs within him:—thither let the man of ruined morals go,—there let him study to infatuate his mind, to imbibe the errors of the place, and to forget that ever he was born and educated in a christian land.

Another inference to be drawn from this subject, is the folly and danger of supposing that we
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are to be redeemed from iniquity by *supernatural influence*, without any efforts of our own.

Far be it from me to weaken that dependence, which any humble and honest man may place upon divine support and assistance, amid the numerous and dangerous trials of human life: He were a cruel man, who should say to Frailty when her eye is lifted up—"Where is now thy God." Never may I breathe, even in whispers, so ungenerous a taunt. Ever let me say to every man who feels his frailties and trembles at temptation,—"Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart."—My only point is to open the eyes of that man, who is infatuated by that fatal enthusiasm which leads him to cast all upon divine operation, and leave nothing for himself to do.

If we open the bible, we read, 'tis true, of many remarkable conversions; but we are not to look for miracles every day. In the common course of things, Christianity redeems mankind from iniquity, by speaking to those principles and passions, which Nature has planted within us; and a man must work out his salvation, by endeavouring to affect his heart by those motives to duty which it presents, and by labouring to cultivate those dispositions which it inculcates.—If a man endeavours to the best of his abilities to acquire these dispositions, then let him look up as often as he will for the assistance and blessing of Almighty God. This is a duty, which God forbid I should ever discourage.

All that I ask of man is, to exert the powers which God has given him, and to make use of the instruments which Providence has put into

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his hand. I will not quarrel with him about points of speculation, that do not interfere with practice: It is the part of spleen and ill nature, to irritate the mind by striking at its harmless tenets. I wish mankind to enjoy just what opinions they please, so long as they are innocent opinions:—but when their errors affect their morals,—when the axe is laid to the root of Christianity,—when the venerable and immortal statutes of virtue are in danger,—every honest man is alarmed, every honest man will speak his mind;—and though sentiments of this kind may not be popular, yet shame on that little pulpit policy which can twist and torture truth ten thousand ways, to make it fit the dangerous prejudices of mankind.

Farther: the present subject points out the *proper test of characters*.

The only point which divine wisdom and benevolence intended to accomplish by the mission of Jesus Christ, is the redemption of mankind from iniquity. Every man therefore who departs from iniquity, who does that justice and loves that mercy, which are the ornaments of humanity and the essence of virtue, in whatever climate he may dwell, to whatever articles of religion he may subscribe, is a sound and accomplished christian: He does all that the Lord his God requires of him; the design of the gospel is answered in him, and he deserves to be esteemed and loved by every friend of liberty and truth.

For all mankind to agree in sentiment upon all points, is not consistent with the present constitution of human nature. A variety of opinions has prevailed in all ages, and upon all subjects.

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There is hardly a point of law or phyfic, but has had its defenders and its oponents ; and we have no more reason to expect an uniformity of judgment in divinity. And so long as a diversity of sentiment does not damp that generous good will, which we owe to all mankind, and interrupt that beautiful current of good offices which ought ever to circulate through society; no friend of Christianity need give himself any alarm about it.

In the history of the world there is no circumstance more amazing, than that the professors of a religion so sublime as ours, should have wrangled so long about points of indifference. If two Pagans are at variance because they differ in their mode of kneeling before their golden god, it is not to be wondered at: Their minds are employed about none but little objects; their religion is composed of punctilio and parade. But when the beauty of Purity, the majesty of Meekness, and the divinity of Benevolence, are presented to the eye; it might be expected that such grand and striking objects would so completely fill up the mind and engross its attention, as to make it indifferent to every thing besides.

Here is a man who loves all mankind and feels for all that lives. He visits the widow and the fatherless in their affliction, and keeps himself unspotted from the world. As far as his capacity extends, he is eyes to the blind and feet to the lame: the father of the poor, the guardian of innocence, and the patron of merit.—This amiable and God-like man is not to enter the kingdom of God, because he is under the influence of what you are pleased to term a dan-

gerous error. Now in the name of that common sense which the inspiration of the Almighty hath given to us all, what is to prevent a man like this from rising to the mansions of immortality? Is he not qualified for the enjoyment of the place? Has he not the seeds of happiness within him?—Iniquity is the only gulph that divide humanity from heaven: he that has departed from it, is already arrived upon the borders of eternal bliss. Happiness is the natural and necessary consequence of having acted well: This is the beautiful and immortal law of Nature. As soon shall the beam of day render the landscape obscure, as soon shall the sweet sounds of harmony distract and torture the ear; as the testimony of a good conscience fail of inspiring immortal peace, and conferring immortal honor.

That favor which is life, and that loving kindness which is better than life, are confined to no particular country or sect. Every man who bears the mark of integrity and goodness, in whatever quarter of the globe he dwells, in whatever temple he pays his vow, is sure to be the object of divine complacency, and ought to be the object of yours.

Upon the plains of India a poor negro hears the distant groan of a dying man:—Touched by the spirit of sweet humanity, he flies with impatience to the tragic spot.—He beholds the bleeding form of one, whom some lawless hand had assaulted and left for dead.—After having wiped away the honest tear that dimmed his eye, he collects the features of the man whose slave he once had been, and of whose inhuman treatment many a cruel scar reminds him:—But deaf to the
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harsh dictate of revenge, he opens all his heart to the godlike emotions of benevolence : He bears away the tyrant to a place of security, watches over him with tender sollicitude, and all the while he does it, though nature made him rough, the soft influence of pity moulds his manner into gentleness.—Generous barbarian ! Accomplished savage !—Although thou art an utter stranger to our most holy faith,—though thou hast never touched the bible, nor entered the temple of the living God, though no baptismal fountain consecrated thy birth, and though no christian dirges shall be chaunted o'er thy grave,—yet never was I more mistaken if at the tribunal of Almighty God thou shalt not be crowned with glory ; while many a man who boasts of his creed and his church, shall be covered with confusion.

To conclude.—The *beauty* of the christian religion strongly recommends it to the *patronage* of all, who feel for the honor and happiness of human nature.

Its beauty I have attempted to describe ; its beauty you all can feel, and have felt it long. Shall not such a religion be dearer to us than light, than liberty, than life ? Such a religion, does not patriotism, does not philanthropy, does not magnanimity prompt us to protect ? Such a religion will it not be glorious to fix in the heart of the rising age, and transmit to the latest posterity ? Such principles will it not be generous to plant in the minds of the young ones that are here ranged in order before ye ? Such a seal shall we not set with rapture to their soft and yielding bosoms, and make the impression immortal ? Such an image shall we not stamp with extacy
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upon them?—an image than which there is not in nature, than which there cannot be, one more venerable or more beautiful: It is the image of Christ, the image of angels, the image of God.

Will you not allow me to hope, that every professor of Christianity now present will embrace this opportunity of expressing his sacred attachment to it, by giving his generous support to an institution under which young minds are educated in the principles of christian truth.

There are a few particulars in the history of this school which you will give me leave to mention for the information of any who may be strangers to it. It was founded in the reign of James II. when a crafty Jesuit, of the name of Poulton, zealous to propagate his religion, set up a school and advertised to educate the children of the poor upon a plan of charity. To counteract the influence of this seducing institution, three gentlemen* whose names will be ever remembered with honor, alarmed for the safety of Christianity, and ambitious to signalize themselves in its defence; laid the foundation of this school, the generous design of which is to give the poor a protestant education.

It has been gradually rising in prosperity from its first establishment, and the number of children at this day amounts to 200. The scholars of both sexes are taught all their respective qualifications for the offices of industry; and without any distinction of party in the admission of them, are instructed in the principles of the christian religion.

* Arthur Shallet, Samuel Warburton, and Ferdinando Holland.

The situation of the school is peculiarly favorable to its design, being placed in one of the poorest parts of the metropolis, and the children are provided with all articles necessary to their education without any expence to their parents. It is supported by the subscriptions of individuals, one annual collection, and legacies.

Such is the cause which now looks to you for support. I stand here to plead it. But it needs no advocate: or if it did, turn your eyes from me to those little silent petitioners. Who can look upon innocence and simplicity, without a smile of love? Who can think of simplicity and innocence redeemed from ruin, without a tear of joy?

If in any action, in the compass of charity, the warm feelings of philanthropy may be blended with the calm dictates of reason, they will meet together with a peculiar beauty and harmony in your contribution upon an occasion like this.

It is more than silver and gold that ye give:—ye communicate knowledge, virtue, and happiness. Ye are more than the fathers of the poor:—ye are the venerable guardians of truth, the honorable defenders of the faith, the generous and godlike redeemers of mankind.

Ye contribute all ye can to enlarge the dominions of simplicity, gentleness and love;—to adorn humanity with that goodness, which is the essence of beauty and the soul of bliss;—to pull down the gloomy banners of bigotry, stained with the massacres of mankind, and erect the white standard of charity, liberty and peace;—to regain Paradise below, and to people the regions above.

For once let Fancy with prophetic eye be allowed to look into future scenes. Let her paint
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the child of your fostering hand, rising to respectable stations in life, and discharging with dignity the duties of them. Let her paint him passing along the social walks with that integrity which injures none, and that kindness which smiles upon all. Let her view him preserving amid corruption and fraud, that proud honor and that stubborn independence which constitute the majesty of man; and at last, after having long adorned and blessed society, rising with modest triumph to the tribunal of his God.

When such a fair spirit meets you in Heaven, —say, will it stain your fame, will it damp your extasies, to be told that your hand was exerted in lifting it to that immortal eminence?

Great power of mercy, at whose smile the darkness fled and there was light, —are not these thy favourite offerings? Is not this to worship thee in spirit and in truth!

Peace to the man of penance: —If there is a soul within you, after *this* manner worship ye the God of your fathers.

Within these walls is there a man that does not burn to do an act like this? that is not proud of the present opportunity? that does not spring forward in fancy to the door, impatient to express his generous feelings there?

I will not believe that any man will leave this place this day, without some expression of his regard for virtue and truth.

Before I sit down, indulge me with one word to those, for whose peculiar benefit we are now assembled.

My

My younger brothers and sisters!—The sight of so many of you, just entering a world where adversity wears a sting that will call for all your fortitude, and where temptation wears a smile that your virtue will find it hard to resist, fills me with a solicitude which I know not how to express; and makes me wish to address a few words to you with that simplicity which is suited to your years, and that solemnity which your situation inspires.

I hope you have been able in some measure to understand what you have heard to day. The christian religion which you profess and which we have now been considering, is level even to your capacity. Even you may feel its beauty, and taste its pleasures.

To be convinced that it has its pleasures, you have only to obey its laws. It is a notion that commonly prevails at your time of life, that religion will make you melancholy. But if this be your idea, believe me you were never more mistaken. Cheerful as ye are, the religion of Jesus will make you gayer still. It will brighten your brightest moments: It will gild your darkest days.

Let me then hope that you will all cultivate those amiable dispositions it inculcates. Learn to look upon all around you with kindness and good will: Learn to treat every living thing with gentleness. If you receive a kindness, let it never be forgotten: If any injury is done you, forget it if you can; but if you cannot forget it, at least forgive it. Never give way to a spirit of revenge: It is a serpent that will sting you to madness. If once it enters your guileless bosoms,

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——(oh

——(oh trust the humble monitor of this day!)
 ——your faces will no more be placid, your moments will no more be gay.

Do you wish to express your gratitude to that providence which placed you here?——to those patrons who support your education, to those preachers who have exerted themselves in your cause?——If ye do, let your future conduct be the proof.

While that is amiable and fair, you will be respectable in a state of poverty, you will be chearful in the chamber of sickness, and calm amid the agonies of death. AMEN.

F I N I S.

